

Message Text

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TRSE-00 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 JUSE-00 L-03 NSAE-00

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG PFOR BF

SUBJ: MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS: MULTILATERAL INFORMATION ON
THE BAHAMAS

REF: STATE 037591

1. RESPONSES TO PARA 7 REFTEL FOLLOW:

A. THE PRIMARY MULTILATERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE GCOB IN 1976
WILL CONTINUE TO BE TO OBTAIN FORMAL RECOGNITION OF THE BAHAMIAN
ARCHIPELAGO EITHER UNDER LOS OR BILATERAL AUSPICES. THIS GOAL,
IN AND OF ITSELF, SHOULD CAUSE US NO PROBLEMS AS THE GCOB
UNDERSTANDS AND HAS EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTED US LOS INTERESTS
AND HAS SPECIFICALLY INFORMED US THAT IT IS IN AGREEMENT WITH
THE U.S. ARCHIPELAGO POSITION IN THE LOS NEGOTIATIONS. IN
ADDITION, THE GCOB IS INTERESTED IN OBTAINING (A) CONTINUING
UNDP ASSISTANCE, (B) SUPPORT FOR OBTAINING CARIBBEAN BASED
UN HEADQUARTERS ON FISHING RESEARCH LOCATED IN THE BAHAMAS,
AND (C) LOANS FROM MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT.
IT IS THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT THAT THE BAHAMAS WILL GENERALLY
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CONTINUE TO TAKE POSITIONS IN THE UN SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE

US AND UK. THE GCOB DOES NOT CONSIDER ITSELF TO BE A MEMBER OF THE "THIRD WORLD" ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE FROM FELLOW ENGLISH SPEAKING CARIBBEAN STATES TO ADOPT A MORE "INDEPENDENT" STANCE AT THE UN. THAT PRESSURE, HOWEVER, IS FAR FROM SUFFICIENT TO MOVE THE GCOB FROM WHAT IT CONSIDERS ITS OWN BEST INTERESTS. (THIS IS EVEN TRUER TODAY THAN PERHAPS A YEAR AGO THANKS TO THE TOURIST WINDFALL THE BAHAMAS RECEIVED FOLLOWING THEIR VOTE WITH THE U.S. ON THE ANTI-ZIONISM RESOLUTION AND THE SUBSEQUENT FAVORABLE PUBLICITY THAT VOTE RECEIVED IN NASSAU.) THIS IS NOT TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE GCOB IS ABOVE BARGAINING ITS VOTES IN THE UN WITH OTHERS IF IT CAN THEREBY ENHANCE ITS OWN GOALS, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO LOS AND RELATED MATTERS. LIMITED RESOURCES BOTH OF PERSONNEL AND OTHERWISE PLUS A LACK OF INTEREST INHIBIT THE LITERALLY AND FIGURETIVELY INSULAR BAHAMAS FROM PLAYING A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. (THE BAHAMIAN DIPLOMATIC SERVICE CONSISTS OF ONLY TWO AMBASSADORS, ONE JOINTLY ACCREDITED TO THE UN AND WASHINGTON, THE OTHER TO LONDON.) THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HAS RECENTLY PUBLICLY DISMISSED ANY DESIRE TO JOIN THE OAS AND THE COUNTRY IS NOT EVEN A MEMBER OF CARICOM. IT IS THE EMBASSY'S PERCEPTION THAT WHILE THE BAHAMAS MIGHT WISH TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN SOME OF THE UN AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS, THE WILL AND RESOURCES ARE NOT SUFFICIENT TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL.

B. AS MENTIONED ABOVE, THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT OTHER ENGLISH SPEAKING CARIBBEAN STATES PARTICULARLY JAMAICA AND POSSIBLY GUYANA HAVE ATTEMPTED IN THE PAST TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE GCOB'S STANCE AT THE UN. AT THE SAME TIME, THE BAHAMAS HAS CONSISTENTLY SHOWN THAT ITS OWN SELF INTEREST COMES FIRST AND FOREMOST AND THIS PRESSURE HAS THUS FAR PRODUCED NEGLIGIBLE RESULTS AND IS NOT LIKELY TO ALTER IN 1976. AT THE SAME TIME, THE BAHAMAS WOULD NOT LIKE TO FIND ITSELF IN A MINISCULE MINORITY WITH THE US ON AN ISSUE WHERE ALL OR MOST OF THE OTHER STATES OF THE ENGLISH SPEAKING CARIBBEAN AND SUB-SAHARA AFRICA WERE IN THE OTHER COLUMN. THE EMBASSY HAS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE GCOB ATTEMPTS TO EXERT INFLUENCE ON OTHER STATES ALTHOUGH WE KNOW THAT IT HAS HELD MEETINGS WITH NEIGHBORING AND OTHER STATES ON LOS AND RELATED MATTERS. LIKEWISE, THE GCOB IS A FIRM SUPPORTER OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND ALTHOUGH LESS VOCAL ABOUT SOUTHERN AFRICA, HAD NO HESITATION IN MAKING ITS VIEWS CONFIDENTIAL

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KNOWN IN THE CASE OF BELIZE.

C. THE PRESENT MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HAS FIRM CONTROL OVER HIS MINISTRY AND NONE BUT THE MOST MINOR DECISIONS ARE MADE WITHOUT HAVING FIRST CONSULTED HIM. IT IS THE EMBASSY'S OPINION THAT, SUBJECT TO ONE CAVEAT NOTED BELOW, HE EXERCISES THE SAME TIGHT CONTROL OVER THE GCOB MISSION IN NEW YORK. THE EMBASSY HAS ALMOST CONSISTENTLY FOUND THE MINISTRY IN NASSAU TO BE CURRENT ON MAJOR ISSUES BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AND WITH APPARENT SUFFICIENT INFORMATION TO MAKE A DECISION. THE NUMBER TWO MAN AT THE MISSION, WHO WITH THE INFREQUENT ATTENDANCE OF AMBASSADOR JOHNSON NORMALLY TENDS THE SHOP, IS DR. D. L. HEPBURN, AN EDUCATED, URBANE, GENEVA TRAINED BAHAMIAN WHO COMES AS CLOSE AS THE BAHAMAS HAS TO BEING A CAREER DIPLOMAT. HEPBURN KNOWS HIS JOB AND FROM AVAILABLE INFORMATION TURNS IN A CREDITABLE PERFORMANCE. BECAUSE OF HIS CONSTANT EXPOSURE TO THIRD WORLD DELEGATES IN NEW YORK, HOWEVER, HE MAY WELL BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO THEIR POSITIONS THAN HIS COLLEAGUES IN NASSAU. GIVEN ADDERLEY'S TIGHT REIN, IT IS NEVERTHELESS UNLIKELY THAT HIS VIEWS ARE ALLOWED TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHOUT APPROVAL FROM NASSAU. THE ONE UNCERTAINTY RELATES TO ADEQUACY OF COMMUNICATION. WHILE PHONE CONNECTIONS ARE EXCELLENT AND EVEN POUCHES CAN BE EXCHANGED IN A MATTER OF HOURS, ADDERLEY TENDS TO BE A POOR ADMINISTRATOR AND CAN EASILY GET BOGGED DOWN. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW OCCASIONS WHEN HE SEEMED LESS THAN UP TO THE MINUTE ON UN MATTERS WHICH, WHILE IMPORTANT TO THE US, WERE DOUBTLESS CONSIDERED MARGINAL TO GCOB INTERESTS. HOWEVER, HE GENERALLY HAS SEEMED RESPONSIVE TO APPROACHES ON SUCH MATTERS AND IN ONE RECENT CASE (UN VOTE ON KOREA) DIRECTED A CHANGE IN THE GCOB POSITION SHORTLY BEFORE A VOTE AS A RESULT OF THE EMBASSY'S REPRESENTATIONS.

D. NONE OF THE THREE BAHAMIANS NOW ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN DIPLOMACY HAVE SIGNIFICANT IF ANY POLITICAL POWER. WHILE THERE ARE RUMORS THAT JOHNSON AND/OR HEPBURN MIGHT BE REPLACED BY THE PRESENT MINISTER OF TOURISM AND MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, CLEMENT MAYNARD, (A PERSON OF SOME INDEPENDENT POLITICAL POWER), SUCH A CHANGE WOULD NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DETER THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS FROM FORMULATING POLICY AND BEING CONFIDENT THAT IT WOULD BE CARRIED OUT.

E. THE BAHAMAS HAS GENERALLY BEEN RECEPTIVE TO US REPRESENTATIONS. IT IS THE EMBASSY'S OPINION THAT THE MANY BRIEFINGS, LETTERS AND AIDE MEMOIRES LEFT WITH THE PERMANENT CONFIDENTIAL

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SECRETARY AND MINISTER NOT ONLY BY US, BUT BY THE BRITISH AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE BRITISH HAVE NOT ONLY BEEN APPRECIATED BUT HAVE SERVED AS USEFUL INPUT IN THE FORMULATION OF GCOB POLICY: (A RECENT CASE IN POINT WAS THE BAHAMIAN DECISION TO REVERSE ITS DECISION TO CO-SPONSOR THE SECOND RESOLUTION ON DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON DECOLONIZATION AFTER BEING INFORMED THAT THE FIRST RESOLUTION WHICH THE SECOND WOULD PUBLICIZE HAD CONCLUDED THAT UK AND US MILITARY BASES IN BERMUDA, THE TURKS AND CAICOS AND THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS WERE "THREATS TO AREA SECURITY." IN ONLY ONE INSTANCE HAS THE EMBASSY FOUND IT NECESSARY TO SEEK FURTHER AMMUNITION FROM THE DEPT TO PERSUADE THE GCOB TO AMEND A POSITION TO WHICH WE WERE OPPOSED. IN THIS CASE -- KOREA -- THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS HAD APPARENTLY GIVEN HIS ORAL ASSURANCE TO A NORTH KOREAN REPRESENTATIVE THAT IN THE VOTE ON THE HOSTILE

RESOLUTION THE BAHAMAS WOULD ONCE AGAIN ABSTAIN. GIVEN THE MINISTER'S CHARACTER (HIS WORD IS HIS HONOR) HE WAS OBVIOUSLY RELUCTANT TO REVERSE HIMSELF. A LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER PROVED SUFFICIENT, HOWEVER, TO CAUSE THE GCOB TO MOVE FROM ABSTENTION TO NO ON THAT ISSUE. IN THE EMBASSY'S OPINION, THE BAHAMAS ARE NOW (IF THEY EVER HAD ANY DOUBTS) SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR OF OUR LINKAGE OF THEIR VOTING IN MULTI-NATIONAL FORA AND OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. EQUALLY IMPORTANT AS THE ZIONISM RESOLUTION MADE CLEAR,

THEY ARE COMING MORE AND MORE TO REALIZE THAT VOTING AT THE UN IS NOT AN ACADEMIC EXERCISE DEVOID OF POLITICAL AND EVEN ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS. THE BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT IS KEENLY AWARE OF THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF OUR SUPPORT FOR ITS POSITION ON THE ARCHIPELAGO CONCEPT AND HAS IN THE PAST SOLICITED OUR SUPPORT. THE EMBASSY IS UNAWARE OF ANY OTHER INSTANCE WHEN THE GCOB HAS SOLICITED OUR SUPPORT.

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